

Blue-tongued skink

Blue-tongued skinks^[2] are lizards of the Australasian genus *Tiliqua*, which includes some of the largest members of the skink family (Scincidae). They are commonly called **blue-tongued lizards**, simply **blue-tongues**, **blueys** in Australia, or **panana** in Indonesia. As suggested by these common names, a prominent characteristic of the genus is a large blue tongue that can be bared as bluff-warning to potential enemies.^[3] Their tongue can also deform itself and produce a thick mucus in order to catch prey.^[4] They are relatively shy in comparison with other lizards, and also significantly slower due to their shorter legs.

Systematics and distribution

Blue-tongued skinks are closely related to the genera *Cyclodomorphus* and *Hemisphaeriodon*. All species are found on mainland Australia with the exception of *Tiliqua gigas*, which occurs in New Guinea and various islands of Indonesia. The Tanimbar blue-tongued skink, a subspecies of *Tiliqua scincoides*, is also found on several small Indonesian islands between Australia and New Guinea. *Tiliqua nigrolutea*, the blotched blue-tongued skink, is the only species present in Tasmania.

Ecology

Most species of blue-tongued skinks are diurnal, ground-foraging omnivores, feeding on a wide variety of insects, gastropods, flowers, fruits, and berries.^[5] The pygmy blue-tongue is again the exception, being primarily an ambush predator of terrestrial arthropods.^[6]

All are ovoviviparous, with litter sizes ranging from 1–4 in the pygmy blue-tongue and shingleback to 5–24 in the eastern and northern blue-tongues.^[7]

Blue-tongued skinks



Blotched blue-tongued skink (*Tiliqua nigrolutea*)

Scientific classification

Kingdom:	<u>Animalia</u>
Phylum:	<u>Chordata</u>
Class:	<u>Reptilia</u>
Order:	<u>Squamata</u>
Family:	<u>Scincidae</u>
Subfamily:	<u>Egerniinae</u>
Genus:	<u><i>Tiliqua</i></u> Gray, 1825^[1]

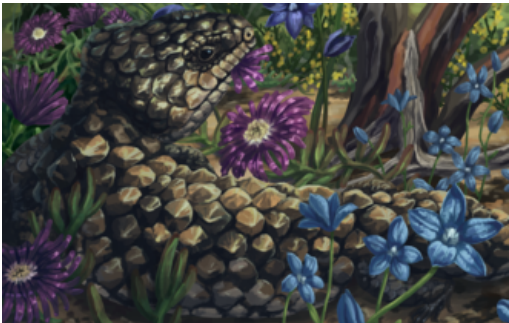
Species

Eight extant, see text.

Synonyms

Trachydosaurus

Species

Name	Scientific Name	Picture	Subspecies
<u>Adelaide pygmy blue-tongue skink</u>	<i>T. adalaidensis</i> (W.Peters, 1863)		
No common name	† <i>T. frangens</i> ^[8] Hutchinson & Scanlon, 2009		
<u>Indonesian blue-tongued skink</u>	<i>T. gigas</i> (Schneider, 1801)		<i>T. g. gigas</i> , Giant blue-tongued skink; <i>T. g. evanescens</i> , Merauke blue-tongued skink; <i>T. g. keyensis</i> , Key Island blue-tongued skink
<u>Centralian blue-tongued skink</u>	<i>T. multifasciata</i> Sternfeld, 1919		
<u>Blotched blue-tongued skink</u>	<i>T. nigrolutea</i> (Quoy & Gaimard, 1824)		
<u>Western blue-tongued skink</u>	<i>T. occipitalis</i> (W. Peters, 1863)		

<u>Shingleback, bobtail</u>	<i>T. rugosa</i> (Gray, 1825)		<i>T. r. aspera</i> , Eastern shingleback; <i>T. r. konowi</i> , Rottneest Island bobtail; <i>T. r. palarra</i> , Shark Bay bobtail; <i>T. r. rugosa</i> , Common shingleback, bobtail
<u>Common blue-tongued skink</u>	<i>T. scincoides</i> (White, 1790)		<i>T. s. chimaerea</i> , Tanimbar blue-tongued skink; <i>T. s. intermedia</i> , Northern blue-tongued skink; <i>T. s. scincoides</i> , Eastern blue-tongued skink
<u>Irian Jaya blue-tongued skink</u>	<i>Tiliqua</i> sp.		

Nota bene: A binomial authority in parentheses indicates that the species was originally described in a genus other than *Tiliqua*.

Extinct species

Multiple extinct species of blue-tongued skinks have been proposed. *Tiliqua frangens*, the largest known species of the genus, lived during the Pliocene and Pleistocene epoch around the Wellington Caves of New South Wales in Australia. Another extinct species *T. laticephala* may represent the same taxon as *T. frangens*. Its nearest relative is the extant *T. rugosa*, which is half the size and lacks the bony plates of *T. frangens*.^{[9][10][11]}

Another extinct species *T. wilkinsonorum* also lived during the Pliocene epoch. The earliest possible species is *T. pusilla* from the middle Miocene, but researchers question whether this species belong to the genus *Tiliqua* due to its uncertain phylogenetic position that causes paraphyly.^[9]

In captivity

Some species of the genus *Tiliqua* are kept as household pets. *Tiliqua scincoides* are one of the first species of lizard to be kept as pets, and the first lizard known to have been bred in captivity, with the first successful clutches being produced no later than 1897.^[12] They are on average very friendly when raised in captivity, and are often called "the dogs of reptiles". Captive specimens can live 20 years or longer.^[13]

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Further reading

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External links

- Bluetongue fact file (<http://www.abc.net.au/science/scribblygum/February2000/default.htm>)
 - Blue-tongued Lizards in New South Wales (http://www.amonline.net.au/factsheets/blue_tongue_lizard.htm)
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